

INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION
TO RENAME THE MCKINNEY ACT,
THE MCKINNEY-VENTO HOME-
LESS ASSISTANCE ACT

HON. JOHN J. LaFALCE

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 6, 2000

Mr. LaFALCE. Mr. Speaker, today I have the honor to introduce legislation that would rename the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, in tribute to Congressman BRUCE VENTO's tireless commitment to the homeless. I hope we can speed the enactment of this bill into law prior to the adjournment of the 106th Congress.

BRUCE F. VENTO has been a passionate champion and effective advocate on behalf of homeless people throughout his career. Traces of his tireless commitment can be found on any forgotten street in urban America: in a shelter where families can go for a hot meal, or a vacant building that has been converted into a place where the homeless can find a bed, and a roof over their heads. BRUCE wrote many of the laws that bring compassion and comfort to our poor and destitute every single day. It is most appropriate that we honor what he has done on behalf of some of our most vulnerable citizens.

In 1982, BRUCE VENTO introduced legislation to create the Emergency Shelter Grant Program. He was the first Member to bring the plight of our nation's homeless people to the attention of the Banking Committee in Congress. An amendment he attached to a housing bill, to provide matching grants to repair vacant buildings to be used as temporary shelters, became the first national legislation to provide federal assistance for emergency homeless shelters.

Throughout the 80's, BRUCE worked time and time again with other Banking Committee Members to build the coalitions and the interest necessary to enact comprehensive legislation to help the nation's homeless. In early 1987, he worked to pass an aid package that included \$100 million for a program of emergency shelter grants to help charitable organizations and state and local governments renovate buildings for the homeless, and succeeded in enacting the legislation into law.

In that same year, BRUCE VENTO was an original author of a larger, more comprehensive measure that became known as the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. This legislation was the first and only coordinated federal initiative directed toward the problem of homelessness, and the only social program that was passed during the Reagan era. The McKinney Act seeks to meet some of the most immediate needs of the homeless: shelter, food, health care, education, job training services, and transitional housing through programs at HUD, FEMA, HHS, the Education and Labor Departments.

It is particularly fitting to honor BRUCE VENTO by joining his name with that of his friend and colleague, Stewart B. McKinney, on legislation they worked together on for so many years. In 1987, after Representative McKinney's passing, BRUCE took a leading role in seeking to name the BRUCE used to de-

scribe Stewart McKinney are equally applicable to him. In fact, our former Banking Committee chairman, Henry B. Gonzalez, used to call BRUCE the "Father of the Homeless."

BRUCE VENTO didn't stop with the enactment of the landmark homeless assistance act. Throughout the remainder of the 1980's and 1990's, he introduced the McKinney reauthorization acts of 1988, 1990, 1992, and 1994, pushing the provisions through our Banking Committee and the other Committees with jurisdiction, while continually seeking additional appropriations and fighting attempts to lessen resources for homeless persons.

BRUCE was also the chief sponsor of the House version of the Rural Homelessness Assistance Act. In 1992 he was the first Member of Congress to join with over 50 organizations across the country to sign onto the report, "Beyond McKinney; Policies to End Homelessness." In February of 1993, the Speaker of the House announced the formation of the Speaker's Task Force on Homelessness organized at the request of President Bill Clinton. BRUCE VENTO was appointed as Chairman of the Task Force, which issued a comprehensive, nationally recognized report to the Speaker one year later.

During the past few years, BRUCE has continued to work hard on the McKinney Act, even as the majority party on the Banking Committee has taken the lead in introducing reauthorizing legislation. BRUCE has worked to strengthen, maintain and renew the funding and the requirement for permanent housing funds in McKinney Act programs. He also authorized language that improved prevention planning and activities so that people do not become homeless due to lack of foresight or planning. The Vento prevention language added discharge planning requirements for persons who are discharged from publicly funded institutions—that is, mental health facilities, youth facilities and correctional facilities—so that people are not merely discharged to the streets.

BRUCE also introduced the Stand Down Authorization Act. Created by several Vietnam veterans, Stand Downs are designed to give homeless veterans a brief respite from life on the streets. The Stand Down bill would, in conjunction with the grassroots community, expand the VA's role in providing outreach assistance to homeless veterans. In this Congress, H.R. 566 gained the strong support of over 100 bi-partisan cosponsors, the VA, the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the Disabled American Vets (DAV).

As he worked with all of us in this Congress, BRUCE consistently strove to improve, and even save, the lives of homeless men, women and children around this nation. In the tradition of Minnesota's great leader, Hubert H. Humphrey, BRUCE has always believed that we are elected to formulate and enact policies which improve the quality of life of our citizens. I have had the pleasure of working with him for almost a quarter of a century, and have been continually inspired by the strength of this commitment and the energy with which he has pursued it.

I urge you to join me in cosponsoring, and advocating for speedy passage of, the McKinney-Vento Act bill so that we can duly honor a colleague who has worked long and hard for

the most vulnerable Americans, people who are without a home to call their own.

TAIWAN NATIONAL DAY

HON. GEORGE W. GEKAS

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 6, 2000

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, on the occasion Republic of China's forthcoming National Day, I wish to offer President Chen Shui-bian and his people my best wishes.

Taiwan is a proud nation that has made extraordinary progress in many areas, economic and political. Economically, the people in Taiwan enjoy one of the highest standards in the world; politically, it has a vibrant democracy with free elections, respect for human rights and a free press. Best wishes to President Chen Shui-bian and his people. May they continue to enjoy economic and political successes.

CHELTENHAM TOWNSHIP

HON. JOSEPH M. HOEFFEL

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 6, 2000

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Cheltenham Township in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania in welcoming dignitaries from their sister city of Cheltenham, England. The dignitaries have come to Cheltenham to celebrate 100 years as an Official First Class Township.

The visit is another exchange in the longstanding relationship between the two communities, which actually began with the founding of Cheltenham, Pennsylvania. Two of our founding fathers brought the name with them from their former home near Cheltenham, England, when they settled in America in the 1600s. The visiting dignitaries include Mayor Daphne Pennell and her daughter, Lorraine, Councillors Brian and Alexis Cassin, Councillor William Todman, and Twinning Officer Annette Wight.

For many years, representatives from both communities have visited their counterparts on official or pleasure trips, forging a bond of friendship and exchanging insights on municipal operations. This year's visit coincides with Cheltenham Township's Community Harvest Festival which attracts families from around the region with activities like haunted hayrides, a craft sale, live music, kids' games and a grand fireworks finale. The dignitaries will also have the opportunity to meet with township and school board officials, tour historic Philadelphia and be honored at a dinner with Centennial Celebration Committee members and other local, county and state officials.

I am pleased to recognize our visitors from Cheltenham, England to Montgomery County and it is my hope that their visit is an educational and rewarding experience in the United States.